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GastroTour Code of Good Practice

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Code of Good Practice (CoGP)

Wine & Gastronomy Tourism — Europe, Georgia, South Africa

A. Introduction

Wine and gastronomy tourism have transitioned from niche activities to essential contributors to sustainable rural development, driving economic growth, fostering cultural preservation, and supporting environmental sustainability. These sectors help bridge urban-rural divides by creating employment opportunities, promoting local products, and celebrating the agricultural heritage of each region.

The growing significance of agritourism, which combines agriculture and tourism, represents a vital part of the wine tourism industry. Agritourism allows visitors to engage with the processes of wine production, explore local farms, and taste seasonal foods, thus fostering deeper connections with the land. This Code of Good Practice (CoGP) aims to provide a comprehensive framework for stakeholders in the wine and gastronomy tourism sectors across Europe, Georgia, and South Africa. It outlines the minimum standards and best practices necessary for delivering sustainable agritourism experiences while protecting local cultures, advancing community engagement, and enhancing the environmental sustainability of the wine industry.

It is designed to:

- Strengthen destination competitiveness
- Embed sustainability and climate resilience
- Foster inclusive economic participation
- Empower local producers, artisans, and farmers
- Build capacity through university–industry collaboration
- Digitally transform sector capabilities
- Promote quality visitor experiences grounded in heritage

Agritourism sits at the heart of this strategy, deepening visitor connection to land, food production, and cultural traditions.

B. Overview of the Three Regions

1) Europe

Europe is home to some of the world's oldest and most prestigious wine regions, including France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Germany, where wine and gastronomy tourism have long been integrated. These regions have developed sophisticated wine routes that intertwine agriculture with tourism, allowing visitors to explore vineyards, engage in harvest activities, and experience local food traditions.

- Agritourism is a core feature in many European countries, with visitors not only sampling wine but also getting hands-on experiences of wine-growing and local food production. From grape harvesting to olive picking and cheese making, agritourism enhances the visitor experience by immersing them in the daily life of farmers and winemakers.
- Sustainability has become a central theme in European agritourism, where wine producers integrate organic and biodynamic farming techniques, focusing on environmental stewardship, carbon footprint reduction, and water conservation.
- Collaborative wine tourism routes, such as Rutas del Vino (Spain), Strade del Vino (Italy), and Great Wine Capitals, foster a shared vision of sustainable tourism that integrates agriculture, gastronomy, and cultural heritage into a cohesive experience. These routes offer themed itineraries that bring together local farms, wineries, and restaurants to showcase the agricultural diversity and sustainable practices of each region.

2) Georgia

Georgia, considered the birthplace of wine, offers a distinct approach to agritourism, rooted in its ancient winemaking traditions. The country's qvevri winemaking method, which is recognized by UNESCO as part of the world's intangible cultural heritage, is central to its wine tourism offerings.

- In Georgia, agritourism blends wine production with the country's rich cultural and agricultural heritage. Visitors have the opportunity to learn about traditional winemaking, participate in grape harvesting, and engage with local farmers. Experiences also include cooking classes focused on regional cuisine, bread baking, and local food pairing with wine.

- Agritourism routes in Kakheti, Tbilisi, and other wine-producing areas offer hands-on visits to family-run wineries, where small-scale local farmers share their wine and agricultural knowledge. These agritourism experiences foster a deeper appreciation of Georgia's natural landscape and cultural identity while offering opportunities for sustainable development in rural areas.
- The National Wine Agency and local wine routes have introduced structured programs that encourage tourism operators and local producers to engage in cultural preservation and sustainable practices, ensuring the long-term viability of Georgia's unique wine and food tourism.

3) South Africa

South Africa's wine tourism landscape is a blend of luxury wine estates and community-based agritourism. Regions such as Stellenbosch, Paarl, Franschhoek, and Hemel-en-Aarde offer high-end, exclusive wine tasting experiences while township-based agritourism initiatives focus on community engagement, job creation, and skills development in agriculture and tourism.

- Agritourism in South Africa is characterized by hands-on experiences that connect visitors directly with the land. Tourists can participate in activities such as grape harvesting, farm tours, wine production workshops, and local food experiences, often within eco-friendly or organic farm settings.
- Sustainability is a key focus for many South African wine estates, where sustainable practices like regenerative farming, water conservation, and biodiversity protection are integral parts of the wine production process. Estates like Creation Wines and Rust en Vrede lead the way in environmental stewardship while offering agritourism experiences that are both educational and sustainable.
- South Africa's agritourism model also includes small-scale farms in township areas like Khayelitsha and Langa, where local food production and wine tasting experiences are paired with community-led initiatives aimed at youth employment, women's empowerment, and smallholder farm support.

C. Proposed Code of Good Practice (CoGP)

Each area of this Code of Good Practice (CoGP) is structured around two progressive tiers of implementation: Baseline and Leadership. Together, these tiers provide a clear pathway for continuous improvement — guiding wine, gastronomy, and agritourism operators from essential compliance towards sectoral excellence and innovation.

Baseline:

The Baseline represents the foundational standards that all participating operators are expected to meet. These criteria ensure compliance with legal, ethical, and sustainability requirements while establishing a minimum level of quality and responsibility in operations. Baseline practices lay the groundwork for safe, inclusive, and environmentally responsible tourism experiences.

At this level, the focus is on:

- Meeting national and international legal requirements;
- Implementing essential sustainability and social equity measures; and
- Establishing policies, systems, and staff training to ensure consistent performance.

Leadership:

The Leadership tier defines the aspirational standards that distinguish best-practice operators as innovators and role models within the wine and gastronomy tourism sector. Leadership criteria go beyond compliance to demonstrate excellence, creativity, and long-term commitment to sustainability, education, and community impact.

At this level, operators are encouraged to:

- Pursue recognised certifications and external validation;
- Invest in research, digital innovation, and continuous staff development;
- Actively contribute to local economic empowerment, biodiversity protection, and cultural preservation; and
- Share their knowledge and achievements to inspire wider industry transformation.

This two-tiered approach ensures that the CoGP remains inclusive and scalable, accommodating small family estates, regional networks, and international wine tourism enterprises alike. It supports a culture of accountability, collaboration, and learning — enabling the sector to evolve towards climate-smart, socially just, and culturally enriching tourism across South Africa, Georgia, and Europe.

The following key performance areas have been identified for the purpose of this guideline. A breakdown of the two-tier approach for each of these KPA's are herewith provided:

1) Governance & Legal Compliance

- Baseline:
 - Ensure full compliance with local, regional, and national laws governing tourism, food safety, licensing, and sustainability. This includes compliance with alcohol regulations, health and safety standards, HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points), and environmental laws regarding waste, water usage, and agricultural chemicals.
 - Establish a formal sustainability policy that addresses the long-term environmental, social, and economic impacts of the operation, including waste management, resource conservation, and carbon reduction.
- Leadership:
 - Integrate internationally recognized certifications into agritourism operations, such as SWSA (Sustainable Wine South Africa), IPW (Integrated Production of Wine), and FAIR'N GREEN (Germany) for wineries focused on environmental sustainability.
 - Actively engage with local governments and tourism authorities to promote best practices in governance and support the regional wine tourism infrastructure through collaborative development projects.
- Evidence:
 - Legal documents such as licenses, certifications, and compliance with health and safety and environmental regulations; evidence of annual sustainability reports or third-party audits.

Evidence Type	Description	Verification Method
Business Licenses & Permits	Valid operating licenses, tourism permits, food safety certifications, and liquor licenses	Review of official documentation issued by local/regional authorities
Health & Safety Compliance Records	Evidence of HACCP certification, health inspection reports, or compliance audits	Inspection reports, certificates, or audit summaries
Environmental Compliance Documentation	Permits and records confirming adherence to environmental legislation (e.g., waste disposal, water use, pesticide control)	Copies of environmental permits, monitoring reports, or audit findings
Sustainability Policy Document	Written sustainability policy outlining goals, commitments, and procedures for environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance	Policy document and internal dissemination record
Sustainability or Impact Reports	Annual reports detailing sustainability actions, metrics, and achievements	Published report, board-approved version, or website publication
Third-Party Audit Reports	Results from external sustainability or compliance audits verifying adherence to standards	External audit certificates or summary reports
Certification Records	Evidence of participation in certification programs such as IPW, SWSA, Equalitas, or FAIR'N GREEN	Certificates or registration confirmations
Government or Industry	Proof of collaboration with tourism	Meeting minutes, partnership letters, or

Engagement Evidence	authorities participation in policy/industry working groups	or in working groups	project reports
Carbon Accounting & Resource Use Data	Measurement of carbon footprint, energy consumption, and water usage as part of sustainability monitoring	of carbon footprint, energy consumption, and water usage as part of sustainability monitoring	KPI dashboards or verified environmental data logs
Legal Register & Renewal Schedule	Master register listing all legal obligations, certification renewals, and review timelines		Internal compliance tracking sheet or renewal log

Advanced Verification (Leadership Tier):

- Independent verification of sustainability reporting (e.g., assurance statement).
- Membership in national or international responsible tourism networks.
- Recognition through Sustainability Leadership Awards or government-endorsed excellence ratings.

2) Economic Sustainability & Local Procurement:

- Baseline
 - Establish a formal procurement policy covering ethical sourcing, fair pricing, anti-corruption, and fair payment terms.
 - Maintain transparent supplier selection processes with at least 20–30% local procurement from regional farmers, producers, and artisan suppliers.
 - Prioritise procurement from SMEs, women-led businesses, youth-led enterprises, and community-based suppliers.
 - Keep accurate procurement records showing supplier origin, ownership, and sustainability credentials.
 - Ensure alignment with national regulations and tourism sector ethical guidelines.
- Leadership
 - Source ≥50% of food, wine inputs, artisanal goods, and tourism products from local suppliers within the region.

- Implement a Supplier Development Program offering training, mentorship, and capacity-building for small producers.
 - Integrate procurement into circular economy initiatives (e.g., compost suppliers, upcycled products, regenerative farms).
 - Offer multi-year contracts or preferential agreements to support the stability of local producers.
 - Publish an annual Local Economic Impact Report outlining procurement metrics, supplier profiles, and economic outcomes.
 - Collaborate with cooperatives, women-led farms, youth agri-entrepreneurs, and sustainable suppliers as part of economic empowerment programs.
- Evidence
 - A formal procurement and supplier diversity policy, supplier invoices and procurement registers, data demonstrating the percentage of local sourcing, contracts with SMEs or community suppliers, records confirming ethical payment timelines, documentation of supplier training attendance, and the Annual Local Economic Impact Report.

Evidence Type	Description	Verification Method
Procurement Policy & Supplier Diversity Statement	Formal policy outlining ethical sourcing, fair payment terms, inclusion of SMEs, women-owned and youth-owned suppliers	Internal policy document, dated and approved by management
Local Procurement Register	Comprehensive list of suppliers indicating location, ownership type (SME, women-led, youth-led), and product category	Procurement spreadsheets, ERP extract, or manually maintained register
Supplier Contracts & MoUs	Agreements with local producers, farmers, artisans, cooperatives, or micro-enterprises	Signed contracts, partnership letters, or MoUs
Invoices & Payment Records	Proof of fair payment timelines and active purchasing from local and diverse suppliers	Invoice samples, payment confirmations, accounts payable logs
Percentage Local Sourcing Data	KPI summary showing % of total procurement sourced locally or from designated empowerment categories	KPI dashboard, quarterly procurement reports
Supplier Development Documentation	Records of workshops, mentorship, training, or technical assistance	Attendance logs, training materials, workshop reports

	provided to emerging suppliers	
Circular Economy Supplier Evidence	Proof of sourcing from regenerative, organic, zero-waste, upcycled, or circular-economy producers	Supplier profile, certification badges, or invoices
Economic Impact Reports	Annual or quarterly reports demonstrating local economic contributions through procurement	Annual Local Economic Impact Report, sustainability report extract
Community SME Partnership Records	Documentation of engagement with local cooperatives, township producers, or rural farming groups	MoUs, project summaries, collaboration agreements
Audit Logs or Verification Statements	Internal or external audit verifying procurement practices, local sourcing percentages, and compliance with policy	Audit summary, assurance statement, or verification letter

3) Social Equity, Gender and Community Empowerment

- Baseline:
 - Implement social equity policies that promote fair labour practices, including non-discrimination, fair working hours, and adequate wages for workers in wine estates, vineyards, and agritourism settings.
 - Commit to local employment and community engagement, ensuring that agritourism activities benefit local people, especially in rural and marginalized areas.
 - Safe working conditions.
- Leadership:
 - Pursue WIETA (Wine and Agricultural Ethical Trade Association) certification in South Africa or equivalent ethical trade certifications for wineries, particularly those in regions with large smallholder farms or agritourism businesses.
 - Implement gender equity goals and reporting.

- Engage in community development initiatives, such as skills training, youth employment, and women's empowerment, directly tied to agritourism.
- Evidence:
 - Written HR policies, training logs, evidence of fair wages and community engagement activities such as workshops, internships, and partnership projects.

Evidence Type	Description	Verification Method
HR & Labour Policies	Official HR policies addressing fair labour, non-discrimination, recruitment, and grievance mechanisms	Policy documents and employee handbook
Employment Contracts & Payroll Records	Proof of fair wages, working hours, and benefits aligned with national labour law	Random sampling of contracts and payroll verification
Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) Reports	Compliance with workplace safety standards, accident logs, and safety audits	OHS inspection reports, safety meeting minutes
WIETA or Ethical Trade Certification	Certification or audit report confirming adherence to ethical trade and fair labour principles	WIETA certification, external audit summary
Gender Equity Plan & Reports	Documentation outlining gender equality goals, training participation data, and representation ratios	Gender audit reports or HR data summary
Community Development Program Records	Evidence of workshops, internships, bursaries, or community outreach linked to tourism activities	Attendance registers, photos, program summaries
Youth & Women Empowerment Initiatives	Data and testimonials from programs supporting women entrepreneurs and youth employment	Program reports, beneficiary feedback
Local Employment Data	Percentage of staff recruited from local communities and nearby rural areas	HR analytics and employment origin tracking

Skills Training Logs	Record of internal or external training sessions for staff and community members	Attendance sheets and evaluation forms
Social Procurement Register	List of local, women-led, or youth-led suppliers used in operations	Procurement records and supplier invoices
Community Partnership Agreements	MoUs or partnership letters with NGOs, schools, or community groups	Signed agreements or project reports
Staff Feedback & Grievance Mechanisms	Documentation of grievance channels, issue resolution, and satisfaction outcomes	Feedback logs and HR resolution reports

Advanced Verification (Leadership Tier):

- Annual Social Impact Report summarising outcomes of community programs, local hiring, and gender equity metrics.
- Recognition from ethical trade awards, gender equality indices, or community development councils.
- Verified participation in Erasmus+ social inclusion or UN Women's Empowerment Principles initiatives.
- Publication of case studies or testimonials highlighting measurable social transformation in local communities.

4) Sustainability & Environmental Impact

- Baseline:
 - Implement sustainable farming practices that align with regional climate conditions and address environmental concerns such as soil erosion, water use, waste management and energy consumption.
 - Develop and implement responsible chemical use and soil protection policies and procedures.
 - Ensure that all agritourism operations, from wine production to culinary experiences, are managed with sustainability in mind, using organic and biodynamic methods where feasible.
- Leadership:
 - Achieve recognition from sustainability programs (e.g., HVE, Equalitas in Europe; FAIR'N GREEN in Germany; WWF Conservation Champions in South Africa).

- Invest in agroecology and regenerative practices, and incorporate renewable energy systems (e.g., solar panels, wind energy) in agritourism facilities to reduce the carbon footprint.
- Implement climate-smart agriculture (drought-tolerant cultivars, conservation till, mulching) practices.
- Invest in zero-waste kitchen frameworks and food waste valorization practices.
- Evidence:
 - Certification badges (e.g., SWSA, HVE); environmental KPIs, annual sustainability reports showing progress on resource conservation, carbon footprint reduction, and waste management.

Evidence Type	Description	Verification Method
Sustainability Certifications & Badges	Accreditation or membership in sustainability programs such as SWSA, HVE, Equalitas, FAIR'N GREEN, or WWF Conservation Champions	Valid certificates, membership letters, or public listing
Environmental Policy & Action Plan	Written policies outlining environmental objectives, responsible chemical use, and climate adaptation strategies	Policy document, action plan, or board approval record
Environmental Management System (EMS)	Implementation of systems aligned with ISO 14001 or regional environmental frameworks	Internal EMS documentation or audit report
Resource Usage Logs	Quantitative data on water, energy, waste, and emissions recorded monthly or quarterly	Data dashboard or KPI tracking sheets
Carbon Footprint	Measurement of CO ₂ emissions from production,	Third-party carbon audit report or in-house

Assessment	logistics, and tourism activities	assessment
Water Management Plan	Records of water usage, irrigation efficiency, and greywater recycling initiatives	Monitoring reports or system diagrams
Soil & Biodiversity Monitoring Records	Documentation of soil health testing, biodiversity surveys, and reforestation or conservation initiatives	Laboratory reports, biodiversity monitoring logs
Renewable Energy Installation Records	Installation certificates or maintenance logs for solar panels, wind turbines, or bioenergy systems	Energy provider reports, invoices, or photo evidence
Waste & Recycling Reports	Data on waste separation, recycling rates, composting outputs, and food waste reduction	Monthly waste audit summaries or supplier collection reports
Zero-Waste Kitchen Program Documentation	Evidence of food waste valorisation projects, composting, or surplus redistribution	Kitchen records, compost logs, or partnership letters
Annual Sustainability Report	Published document summarizing progress on environmental KPIs and climate action commitments	Official report (digital or printed)
Staff Environmental Training Logs	Records of internal or external training on environmental management and sustainable farming	Attendance lists, certificates, or evaluation summaries

Advanced Verification (Leadership Tier):

- Independent third-party environmental audit verifying carbon, water, and waste data accuracy.
- Recognition from national sustainability awards or regional green business councils.

- Inclusion in UNWTO or EU sustainable tourism networks.
- Publication of peer-reviewed or case study documentation on climate-smart agriculture or regenerative viticulture.

5) Agritourism Integration

- Baseline:
 - Offer authentic agritourism experiences that enable visitors to engage directly with local agriculture, whether that be through farm tours, grape harvesting, or learning about traditional winemaking processes.
 - Promote seasonal menus based on locally grown produce, highlighting the connection between agriculture and the local food culture.
- Leadership:
 - Develop thematic agritourism routes that connect local farms, wineries, and gastronomy through collaborative efforts with regional authorities and sustainable tourism networks.
 - Engage in circular economy initiatives, transforming agricultural waste into products or experiences that can enhance agritourism offerings, such as composting workshops or wine barrel repurposing projects.
 - Invest in cultural immersion programs such as Supra traditions and Fynbos culinary narratives.
- Evidence:
 - Visitor feedback, agribusiness partnership agreements, thematic trail listings, and tourist brochures highlighting agritourism activities.

Evidence Type	Description	Verification Method
Agritourism Experience Documentation	Descriptions of farm tours, grape harvesting, or winemaking demonstrations offered to visitors	Event schedules, visitor itineraries, promotional material
Partnership Agreements with Local Farms &	Contracts, MoUs, or collaboration letters confirming joint initiatives between farms, wineries, and food producers	Signed agreements, project summaries

Artisans

Seasonal

Menus &

Sourcing Lists

Menu plans showing use of seasonal and locally sourced ingredients, including percentage of local procurement

Menu documentation, supplier invoices

Visitor

Feedback &

Surveys

Testimonials, satisfaction surveys, and online reviews related to agritourism experiences

Survey results, TripAdvisor or Google Review analytics

Thematic

Agritourism

Routes or Trail

Listings

Participation in regional or national agritourism routes linking wineries, farms, and restaurants

Route maps, DMO listings, or tourism brochures

Circular

Economy

Project Records

Documentation of waste valorisation initiatives (composting, upcycling, biochar, etc.)

Project reports, photo documentation, workshop attendance lists

Cultural

Immersion

Program

Materials

Descriptions of Supra traditions, Fynbos narratives, or similar cultural storytelling activities

Event programs, menus, photos, or promotional content

Educational or

Volunteer

Program Logs

Records of visitor participation in educational farming or harvesting activities

Attendance registers, feedback forms

Community &

Regional

Collaboration

Records

Meeting minutes or correspondence showing participation in regional agritourism networks or working groups

Collaboration letters or membership confirmations

Training &

Capacity

Building

Reports

Staff or community training records focused on agritourism interpretation and storytelling

Attendance logs, certificates, evaluation forms

Digital & Print

Marketing

Materials

Brochures, websites, or QR-linked materials highlighting agritourism activities and sustainability connections

Website screenshots, printed brochures

Monitoring

Reports &

Visitor

Statistics

Annual reports detailing agritourism visitor numbers, community impact, and local economic benefits

Visitor logs, KPI dashboards, or annual impact report

- Recognition or listing in regional or international agritourism awards (e.g., UNWTO, Great Wine Capitals, or World's Best Vineyards).
- Inclusion in national agritourism route directories or protected designation of origin (PDO) heritage trails.
- Publication of case studies in sustainable tourism journals or Erasmus+ reports demonstrating impact.
- External verification of local economic contribution and circular economy practices by independent bodies or development agencies.

6) Cultural Heritage & Education

- Baseline:
 - Educate visitors about local agricultural practices, wine production methods, and regional cuisine, ensuring the transmission of cultural and indigenous knowledge and practices related to agritourism through heritage story telling, traditional food and craft demonstrations.
 - Include interactive experiences such as wine and food pairing workshops, hands-on cooking classes, and traditional farming demonstrations.
- Leadership:
 - Establish collaborations with local universities, research institutions, and cultural organizations to create educational programs for visitors that promote sustainable agriculture and cultural heritage.
 - Integrate heritage and sustainability storytelling into agritourism experiences, enabling visitors to connect emotionally with the region's agricultural roots.
- Evidence:
 - Educational programs, certified guides, and cultural storytelling materials that highlight local traditions and sustainable practices.

Evidence Type	Description	Verification Method
Educational Program Descriptions	Outlines or brochures of educational programs offered to visitors (e.g., pairing workshops, cooking classes, vineyard tours)	Program documents, schedules, or digital listings

Certified Cultural Heritage Guides	List of trained or certified guides specialising in cultural storytelling and agritourism interpretation	Training certificates, HR records
Cultural Storytelling Materials	Written scripts, visual displays, or multimedia resources used to communicate local traditions	Storyboard files, printed panels, digital media
Workshop & Demonstration Records	Evidence of traditional farming, craft, or food demonstrations held for visitors	Attendance sheets, photos, event summaries
University & Research Partnerships	Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), joint curricula, or academic collaborations supporting cultural and agritourism education	Signed MoUs, course outlines, research reports
Community Collaboration Agreements	Documentation of partnerships with local artisans, elders, or cultural associations contributing to visitor programs	Signed agreements or project summaries
Visitor Feedback on Cultural Experiences	Surveys or testimonials specifically referencing cultural and educational engagement	Visitor surveys, feedback summaries
Digital Storytelling Tools	Use of digital, AR/VR, or QR-based interpretation to enhance visitor learning	Screenshots, app links, or demonstration reports
Living Heritage or Artisan Residency Records	Documentation of artisan programs, chef residencies, or traditional product showcases	Program outlines, press releases, media coverage
Interpretive Training Logs	Records of staff participation in interpretive or heritage communication training	Attendance lists, certificates, evaluation reports
Heritage & Sustainability Reports	Annual reports summarizing impact on cultural preservation and education	Published or internal report, website upload

Community Benefit Assessments	Evidence that programs directly benefit local cultural practitioners and artisans	Financial summaries, interviews, case studies
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Advanced Verification (Leadership Tier):

- Recognition by UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage or national heritage boards for cultural preservation and education initiatives.
- Inclusion in academic publications, Erasmus+ case studies, or UNWTO cultural tourism programs as best-practice examples.
- Certification or endorsement as a Living Heritage Site, Wine Route Learning Destination, or Cultural Landscape Stewardship participant.
- Participation in regional or global heritage festivals, culinary residencies, or educational tourism fairs promoting sustainable gastronomy.

7) Higher Education and Skills Partnerships

- Baseline:
 - Establish formal collaboration agreements between universities, TVET institutions, and tourism operators to strengthen the link between education and industry practice, creating a culture of life long learning.
 - Integrate student internships and apprenticeships into winery, restaurant, and agritourism operations to provide experiential learning opportunities.
 - Encourage knowledge exchange through lectures, research visits, and staff placements between academic institutions and tourism enterprises.
 - Incorporate training on sustainable farming, food systems, and wine tourism management into vocational and tertiary education curricula.
 - Facilitate local career pathways by linking education programs with job placements in gastronomy, hospitality, and wine tourism sectors.
- Leadership:
 - Develop joint curricula co-created by academia and industry focusing on food heritage, regenerative agriculture, and tourism innovation.
 - Establish student-run innovation labs and living case studies (e.g., “GastroTour Living Labs”) where learners, researchers, and entrepreneurs test sustainable products, circular economy models, and digital visitor

- Launch entrepreneurship incubators in partnership with universities to support start-ups and microenterprises in wine and gastronomy tourism.
 - Offer visiting chef, farmer, or artisan residencies hosted by universities and tourism operators to strengthen hands-on learning and preserve culinary craftsmanship.
 - Integrate research and data-sharing platforms that connect academic research with industry analytics—supporting continuous innovation, evidence-based policy, and climate-smart development.
 - Participate in international exchange programs under Erasmus+ and similar schemes, facilitating cross-regional learning and global best-practice adoption.
- Evidence:
 - To verify compliance and progress under this pillar, the following documents, data, and outputs may be provided:

Evidence Type	Description	Verification Method
Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs)	Signed agreements between tourism operators, wine estates, and higher education/TVET institutions outlining scope of collaboration	Copy of MoUs or partnership agreements
Internship/Apprenticeship Logs	Records of student placements, including duration, learning objectives, and completion certificates	Internship reports or HR records
Curriculum Documents	Evidence of new or revised academic modules incorporating sustainable gastronomy, agritourism, or food heritage themes	Approved course outlines or syllabi
Training Attendance Registers	Lists of participants (students, staff,	Attendance registers and evaluation forms

	community) attending co-delivered training programs or workshops	
Research Outputs	Publications, dissertations, or applied research papers co-authored by academia and industry	Citation lists or copies of publications
Innovation Lab Reports	Documentation of projects piloted through Living Labs or student-led innovation hubs (e.g., prototypes, case studies, evaluation summaries)	Annual Living Lab summary reports
Entrepreneurship Support Records	Evidence of mentorship or seed funding provided to students or community-based start-ups	Business incubator reports or financial documentation
Residency Programs	Profiles of visiting chefs, artisans, or agricultural experts engaged in teaching residencies	Residency agreements and outcome evaluations
Exchange Program Records	Proof of Erasmus+, bilateral, or regional exchange participation	Mobility logs or institutional partnership records
Impact Indicators	Quantitative data on employability, gender participation, research collaboration, and innovation outcomes	Annual monitoring and evaluation reports

8) Digital Transformation and Smart Tourism

- Baseline:
 - Online visibility and booking: Maintain an updated website, online booking functionality, and verified listings on major search engines and travel platforms to facilitate easy discovery and reservations.

- Digital menus and QR access: Use digital menus, QR codes, or touchless interfaces to share key information—such as wine lists, allergen data, sustainability credentials, or estate narratives.
- Customer relationship management: Implement basic CRM systems for visitor communication, post-visit engagement, and feedback collection.
- Digital payment and feedback tools: Offer secure online payment systems and integrate digital visitor feedback mechanisms to streamline operations.
- Data protection and privacy compliance: Ensure adherence to data privacy laws such as POPIA, GDPR, and other relevant frameworks to safeguard guest information.
- Staff digital literacy: Provide basic training to staff on digital tools, online interaction etiquette, and e-marketing principles to ensure consistent and professional engagement.
- Leadership:
 - Immersive digital storytelling: Develop virtual reality (VR) or augmented reality (AR) tools—such as interactive vineyard tours, cellar experiences, or food preparation demonstrations—that enrich visitor engagement and storytelling.
 - Multilingual accessibility: Adopt AI-assisted translation, multilingual websites, and voice-guide applications to improve accessibility and inclusivity for international guests.
 - Data-driven decision-making: Utilise data analytics and visitor flow mapping to optimise space usage, reduce congestion, enhance sustainability, and tailor services to visitor behaviour.
 - Digital provenance and traceability: Implement blockchain or QR-based systems that authenticate product origins, showcasing transparency in sourcing, ethical production, and sustainability.
 - Smart gastronomy applications: Explore digital tasting menus, sensor-based wine dispensers, or food pairing apps to personalise and enhance the visitor journey.
 - Collaboration and innovation: Partner with universities, tech start-ups, and innovation hubs to pilot new digital gastronomy projects, and to co-create training programs in data analytics, digital marketing, and smart tourism management.

- Continuous innovation culture: Regularly update systems and digital content to maintain competitiveness and align with evolving global smart tourism standards.

- Evidence:

Evidence Type	Description	Verification Method
Digital Infrastructure Records	Proof of operational websites, booking systems, and mobile-optimised content	URL and system audit
QR / Digital Information Access Points	Active QR codes linking to menus, wine data, or sustainability info	QR scans or live demo
CRM and Data Logs	Records of client communication, segmentation, and engagement	CRM extracts or anonymised reports
Social Media & SEO Analytics	Metrics demonstrating reach, engagement, and conversion	Analytics dashboards (Google, Meta)
Staff Training Records	Attendance or certification from digital literacy courses	Training logs or certificates
AR/VR or Smart Tourism Tools	Documentation or prototypes of digital visitor tools	Screenshots, app links, or pilot reports
AI Translation / Accessibility Tools	Demonstration of multilingual or assistive digital features	App demo or feature listing
Visitor Data Analytics Reports	Summaries of visitor patterns and feedback trends	KPI dashboards or analytics summaries
Digital Provenance Records	Blockchain traceability IDs or QR-verified sourcing certificates	Technical report or system certification

Innovation
Partnerships

Agreements or reports from
collaborative digital
projects with universities or
start-ups

MoUs or innovation project
documentation

9) Visitor Experience & Accessibility

- Baseline:
 - Inclusive design and accessibility:
 1. Ensure that tasting rooms, dining areas, restrooms, and walking paths are physically accessible for guests with mobility challenges.
 2. Provide clear signage, adequate lighting, and seating to support older guests and those with visual or mobility impairments.
 - Dietary inclusivity:
 1. Offer dietary options that accommodate allergies, intolerances, religious dietary requirements, and lifestyle preferences (e.g. vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free).
 2. Clearly indicate allergen information on menus, labels, or digital listings via QR codes.
 - Multilingual communication:
 1. Provide essential visitor materials (menus, tasting notes, safety information) in at least two languages or through digital translation tools.
 2. Encourage staff to develop basic multilingual communication skills where feasible.
 - Visitor comfort and safety:
 1. Maintain well-ventilated, shaded, and climate-appropriate seating areas.
 2. Communicate safety protocols clearly (e.g., emergency exits, first-aid availability, alcohol moderation messages).
 - Visitor feedback systems:
 1. Implement feedback cards, surveys, or digital feedback tools to assess visitor satisfaction and identify areas for improvement.
- Leadership:
 - Universal design and accessibility certification:
 1. Adopt universal design principles across all facilities to ensure barrier-free access.
 2. Seek formal accessibility certification or recognition from national or regional tourism boards.

- Cultural and sensory engagement:
 1. Develop multisensory learning experiences—combining taste, touch, aroma, sight, and sound—to deepen visitor connection with terroir, craftsmanship, and culture.
 2. Introduce guided sensory workshops, vineyard walks, and food pairing sessions tailored to diverse learning styles.
- Multilingual and cross-cultural experiences:
 1. Offer guided tours or digital audio guides in multiple languages.
 2. Integrate cultural storytelling that reflects local identity, heritage, and environmental sustainability.
- Seasonal and thematic activations:
 1. Curate seasonal experiences (e.g., harvest festivals, flower-inspired menus, winter wine pairings) to reflect local agricultural cycles and traditions.
 2. Collaborate with local artisans, chefs, and performers to enrich visitor engagement through cultural programming.
- Inclusive visitor policies and training:
 1. Provide ongoing staff training on inclusive hospitality, accessibility etiquette, and cross-cultural sensitivity.
 2. Establish a Visitor Experience Charter outlining service values, inclusivity goals, and quality assurance commitments.
- Emotional and intellectual connection:
 1. Use storytelling, art, and music to evoke emotion and foster lasting connection between visitors, community, and place.
- Evidence:

Evidence Type		Description	Verification Method
Accessibility Reports	Audit	Documents confirming compliance with accessibility standards (e.g., ramps, restrooms, signage, tactile guides)	Independent audit reports or photos
Menu and Allergen Information	Allergen	Menus, digital displays, or QR-linked allergen databases	Menu review or QR scan test
Multilingual Communication		Multilingual brochures, digital guides, or translated signage	Document samples or app demonstration

Materials

Staff Training Records	Certificates or attendance logs from inclusivity, accessibility, or cross-cultural communication training	Training documentation or HR records
Visitor Feedback Reports	Survey summaries or feedback dashboard reports highlighting accessibility and satisfaction metrics	Feedback analytics or compiled reports
Cultural & Sensory Experience Documentation	Descriptions, photos, or videos of sensory workshops, tastings, or themed activations	Event reports or promotional materials
Seasonal Activation Plans	Event calendars or marketing materials showcasing seasonal and thematic programming	Published event schedule
Accessibility Certification or Endorsement	Recognition from tourism authorities or NGOs confirming inclusive design compliance	Certification document
Visitor Experience Charter	Publicly available charter outlining visitor service standards and inclusion commitments	Website or printed policy display
Incident & Safety Records	Logs of guest safety or accessibility incidents and mitigation responses	Operational records or safety reports

Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL)

The Key Performance Indicators will include:

Category	Sample Indicators
Social	Percentage women and youth trained; staff progression rates
Economic in local economy	Percentage local procurement, SME partnerships, revenue growth
Cultural	Number of cultural programs delivered, artisan participation
Environment	Water, energy and waste usage records; annual carbon footprint calculation
Education	Student placements, industry projects, academic partnerships
Visitor	Satisfaction scores, accessibility ratings, repeat visitation

D. Implementation Roadmap & Monitoring

The Implementation Roadmap provides a 12-month, step-by-step plan for operators to embed the Code of Good Practice (CoGP) into their operations and achieve recognition for excellence in sustainability, social ethics, digital innovation, and education partnerships.

It also introduces a Compact Audit Checklist, serving as a monitoring tool to track compliance across key areas: governance, social and ethical practices, environmental performance, agritourism, and innovation integration.

Quarter 1 — Commit & Audit

- Key Focus: Establish leadership commitment, assess current practices, and initiate partnerships for capacity building and certification.
 - Sign the CoGP & Appoint an Internal Lead
 1. Assign a dedicated internal coordinator to oversee the rollout of the CoGP.
 2. Sign a formal commitment declaration signalling the organisation's pledge to sustainable and ethical operations.
 - Quick-Scan of Current Operations
 1. Conduct a self-assessment audit against CoGP baseline standards.
 2. Review current agritourism, sustainability, HR, and visitor experience practices, identifying gaps and areas for improvement.
 - Develop an Action Plan
 1. Create a structured 12-month implementation plan outlining key milestones, measurable targets, and responsible parties.
 2. Define short-term (6-month) and long-term (12-month) goals for sustainability, digital transformation, and education partnerships.
 - Establish Academic & Training Partnerships
 1. Identify and engage university or TVET partners to support staff training, research, and student internship placements.

2. Formalize collaboration through MoUs or letters of intent for capacity-building projects.
 - Publish Visitor Safety & Accessibility Information
1. Update all digital and physical materials to reflect visitor safety measures (emergency procedures) and accessibility features.
 - Choose Certification Paths & Begin Application Process
1. Select relevant certification frameworks (e.g., IPW, SWSA, HVE, Equalitas, FAIR'N GREEN) and begin the application process.
2. Apply to regional wine routes, agritourism clusters, or innovation networks aligned with CoGP objectives.

Quarter 2 — Build & Train

- Key Focus: Develop the operational, human, and digital infrastructure required to implement the CoGP successfully.
 - Finalise SOPs & Operational Policies
 1. Develop or update Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) covering bookings, visitor experience, sustainability management, staff conduct, and emergency response.
 2. Include digital communication, data management, and climate resilience policies.
 - Conduct Staff Training & Digital Skills Rollout
 1. Deliver comprehensive training on sustainability, ethical service, digital literacy, and agritourism fundamentals (farm-to-table, grape-to-glass).
 2. Partner with universities or digital hubs to conduct short courses in smart tourism, e-marketing, and data analytics.
 - Launch Student Placement & Internship Programs
 1. Host student interns or apprentices through university and TVET partnerships.

2. Encourage collaborative industry-research projects focused on visitor analytics, agritourism innovation, or sustainable gastronomy.
 - Start Collecting Data on Key Metrics
 1. Track sustainability KPIs (energy, water, waste, emissions), visitor demographics, satisfaction, and local economic impact.
 2. Establish baseline indicators for future Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL) reporting.
 - Develop Marketing and Branding Materials
 1. Design CoGP-aligned digital and print materials that communicate sustainability, ethics, and innovation.
 2. Highlight your digital transformation efforts and university collaborations in marketing campaigns.

Quarter 3 — Launch & Signal

- Key Focus: Activate new initiatives, showcase visible progress, and demonstrate leadership in agritourism, digital innovation, and learning partnerships.
 - Implement Agritourism & Learning Programs
 1. Launch or expand hands-on visitor experiences such as vineyard tours, harvest participation, winemaking and food pairing workshops, and culinary storytelling sessions.
 2. Integrate educational components, including student-led tastings, chef residencies, or Living Lab demonstrations.
 - Launch Digital Storytelling & Innovation Pilots
 1. Introduce VR/AR visitor experiences, digital tasting journeys, and QR-linked educational content.
 2. Pilot a data analytics dashboard for visitor engagement, operational efficiency, and sustainability tracking.
 - Engage with Local & Regional Partners
 1. Collaborate with tourism boards, DMOs, local SMEs, and academic partners to strengthen regional visibility.

2. Participate in cross-promotion initiatives, peer-learning workshops, or regional innovation clusters.
- Certifications & Awards Submission
1. Submit for sustainability, digital innovation, or tourism excellence awards (e.g., World's Best Vineyards, Great Wine Capitals, UNWTO Smart Tourism Awards).
2. Publicly communicate your achievements to reinforce transparency and credibility.

Quarter 4 — Review & Improve

- Key Focus: Evaluate progress, measure impact, and plan for continuous improvement through knowledge sharing and expanded partnerships.
 - Publish an Annual Sustainability & Impact Report
 1. Compile a comprehensive report summarising progress toward CoGP goals, training outcomes, and economic, social, and environmental performance.
 2. Include data on student placements, community impact, visitor satisfaction, and digital innovation metrics.
 - Complete Internal Review of CoGP Implementation
 1. Conduct an internal audit comparing performance against baseline and leadership indicators.
 2. Host a staff reflection workshop to assess lessons learned, identify areas for improvement, and celebrate achievements.
 - Scale University & SME Programs
 1. Strengthen existing academic partnerships and extend collaboration to SMEs, artisans, and agri-enterprises within the regional network.
 2. Co-design short courses, research pilots, or joint product innovations for mutual benefit.

- Plan Peer-Learning Events & Innovation Forums
 1. Organise internal or regional peer-learning events, bringing together wineries, tourism operators, and educators to share success stories and emerging trends.
- Set Targets for the Following Year
 1. Update objectives for climate resilience, digital adoption, visitor inclusivity, and academic partnerships.
 2. Pursue new certifications and embed results into long-term business strategy.

E. Monitoring & Accountability

Throughout the 12 months, continuous monitoring will be essential to ensure the Code of Good Practice is implemented effectively. Here are the key elements of the monitoring system:

1. Monthly Check-ins:
 - Review key metrics: visitor satisfaction, agritourism engagement, sustainability KPIs, and financial contributions from agritourism activities.
2. Quarterly Review:
 - Conduct internal audits to assess progress toward goals and identify areas requiring adjustment.
3. Annual Evaluation:
 - Perform a comprehensive review of the CoGP implementation and prepare an annual report that includes financial performance, visitor feedback, and social impact of the agritourism initiatives.

F. Compact Audit Checklist

The Compact Audit Checklist serves as a practical self-assessment and reporting tool for operators implementing the Code of Good Practice (CoGP). It allows businesses, estates, and tourism enterprises to track progress quarterly, identify gaps, and maintain alignment with the Baseline and Leadership standards set out in this framework.

The checklist supports continuous improvement, encourages peer benchmarking, and strengthens reporting credibility for sustainability certifications, awards, and academic collaborations.

Each quarter, the operator should:

1. Review their current performance against the CoGP pillars.
2. Record progress, actions, and supporting evidence.
3. Assign a rating score (1–5) for each criterion (1 = not started, 3 = in progress, 5 = achieved or leading).
4. Attach relevant documentation or evidence for verification.
5. Submit or archive the checklist as part of the Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL) system.

Quarterly Audit Pillars

Pillar	Key Evaluation Areas	Quarterly Focus
1. Governance & Legal Compliance	Licensing, food safety, labour law compliance, sustainability policy, certification applications	Ensure all operational and legal documentation is up to date and compliance gaps are addressed
2. Economic Sustainability & Local Procurement	Local procurement percentages, SME partnerships, supplier diversity, ethical payment timelines, procurement policy implementation	Track local sourcing data, verify supplier diversity, and assess economic empowerment contributions
3. Social Equity & Ethics (WIETA alignment)	Fair wages, local hiring, anti-discrimination policies, safe	Verify HR documentation, contracts, and social equity

	working conditions	measures
4.Environmental Sustainability & Climate Resilience	Energy & water efficiency, waste management, regenerative agriculture, biodiversity conservation	Track environmental metrics and verify sustainability data collection
5. Agritourism Integration	Farm-to-table, grape-to-glass experiences, circular economy initiatives, collaboration with local producers	Document visitor experiences and local supplier partnerships
6. Cultural Heritage & Education	Storytelling, cultural preservation, traditional gastronomy, local artisan collaborations	Record new heritage programs, workshops, or community engagements
7. Higher Education & Skills Partnerships	Student placements, research collaborations, joint curricula, innovation labs	Capture internship data, MoUs with universities, and project outcomes
8. Digital Transformation & Smart Tourism	Online booking, digital menus, data analytics, AR/VR storytelling, AI translation tools	Record digital innovation milestones and data-driven improvements
9. Visitor Experience & Accessibility	Inclusive design, dietary accommodation, multilingual materials, seasonal activations	Gather visitor feedback, satisfaction scores, and accessibility audit results
10. Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL)	Data tracking, annual impact reporting, continuous learning	Update KPIs, compile lessons learned, and plan next quarter improvements

Compact Audit Checklist Example (Quarterly Extract)

Pillar	Key Criteria	Baseline Requirement	Leadership Target	Current Rating	Evidence Reference / Notes
Governance & Compliance	Sustainability policy in place	Basic sustainability policy documented	Annual sustainability report published and externally reviewed	4	Policy document, audit report

Economic	Local	At least 20–	≥50%	local 3	Policy
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Sustainability & Local Procurement	sourcing and supplier diversity	30% of procurement sourced locally; procurement policy documented	sourcing; active SME/women/youth supplier development programs; annual local economic impact reporting		document, invoices, payment records, suppliers training records
Social Equity & Ethics	WIETA or ethical certification in progress	Labour practices aligned with WIETA principles	Full certification achieved or renewed	3	Application submission confirmation
Environmental Sustainability	Waste and water management systems	Basic waste sorting and water monitoring	Zero-waste kitchen and water recycling program operational	2	Utility logs, composting records
Agritourism Integration	Local producer engagement	Supplier list includes 20% local farms	≥50% of produce sourced locally; co-marketing with local artisans	5	Supplier invoices, collaboration MoU
Cultural Heritage & Education	Heritage storytelling integration	Staff trained in local cultural interpretation	Annual heritage event or exhibition hosted	3	Training logs, event photos
Higher Education & Skills Partnerships	Student internship program	At least one student placement hosted	Ongoing internship pipeline; joint research project in place	4	MoU with university, student report
Digital Transformation	Smart tourism adoption	Digital booking & CRM system active	AR vineyard tour or data-driven visitor dashboard launched	3	Website, analytics report
Visitor Experience & Accessibility	Inclusivity and multilingual access	Basic accessibility measures in place	Accessibility certification or multi-language VR guide	4	Audit certificate, visitor survey

launched

Monitoring & Evaluation (MEL)	Impact reporting	Basic tracking initiated	KPI	Published impact report with year-on-year comparative analysis	2	KPI dashboard extract, report summary
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Scoring System (Self-Assessment Guide)

Rating	Status	Action Required
1	Not Started	Establish baseline compliance and assign responsibility
2	Early Stage	Initiate policy or activity; limited documentation available
3	In Progress	Implementation underway with measurable outputs
4	Substantial Progress	Near completion; requires final verification or reporting
5	Achieved / Leadership Level	Fully integrated, externally verified, and modelled for replication

Supporting Documents to Attach Each Quarter

To maintain evidence-based accountability, operators should retain and update the following files quarterly:

- Signed Code of Good Practice Commitment Form
- Copies of certifications, licenses, and audit reports
- Training attendance records (staff, students, community)
- Sustainability KPI dashboards (water, waste, energy, carbon)
- Digital analytics reports (website, CRM, visitor data)
- Visitor satisfaction surveys and accessibility audits
- University partnership MoUs, student project summaries, and research outputs
- Photos or brochures from agritourism, cultural, or educational events
- Annual impact report draft or published version

Implementation & Reporting Cycle

- Quarterly Self-Audit: Complete checklist, record actions, assign scores, and collect evidence.
- Internal Verification: Review by management or sustainability lead.
- Peer Learning Submission (optional): Share best practices with regional or sectoral networks.
- Annual Audit & Recognition: Submit compiled evidence for external validation or recognition (e.g., SWSA, WIETA, Erasmus+, or UNWTO award schemes).

Outcome

By systematically completing the Compact Audit Checklist, operators not only ensure compliance with the CoGP but also foster a culture of continuous improvement, transparency, and sectoral innovation.

The checklist functions as a living document—tracking progress in agritourism excellence, digital transformation, education partnerships, and visitor inclusivity while reinforcing accountability to the principles of sustainability and social equity.

G. Conclusion

This Code of Good Practice (CoGP) positions the wine and gastronomy sector as a dynamic force for rural prosperity, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship. It recognises the sector not only as a source of economic vitality but also as a guardian of heritage and biodiversity, ensuring that local traditions, landscapes, and ecosystems are celebrated and protected for future generations. By serving as a platform for inclusive skills development, the industry nurtures talent across communities, empowering individuals through education, training, and meaningful employment. At the same time, it acts as a living laboratory for climate-smart innovation, advancing regenerative agriculture, sustainable tourism, and digital transformation.

Through the integration of education, equity, digital innovation, and climate resilience, the wine and gastronomy sector bridges agriculture, culture, academia, and tourism, reinforcing its role as a model for sustainable regional development. In doing so, it not only strengthens its global leadership but also future-proofs its contribution to resilient rural economies and vibrant cultural landscapes—embodying a holistic vision of prosperity grounded in sustainability, creativity, and connection.